GOLDEN QUEEN MINING COMPANY, INC.

# SOLEDAD MOUNTAIN PROJECT MOJAVE, KERN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

VOLUME 7 (Appendix XIII)

SEPTEMBER 1997



COUNTY OF KERN PLANNING DEPARTMENT BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT RIDGECREST RESOURCE AREA RIDGECREST, CALIFORNIA

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT PUBLIC MEETING

IN RE THE GOLDEN QUEEN MINING

SOLEDAD MOUNTAIN PROJECT

LOCATION: ROSAMOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

1981 ROSAMOND BOULEVARD

ROSAMOND, CALIFORNIA

DATE AND TIME: TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 1997

7:00 P.M.

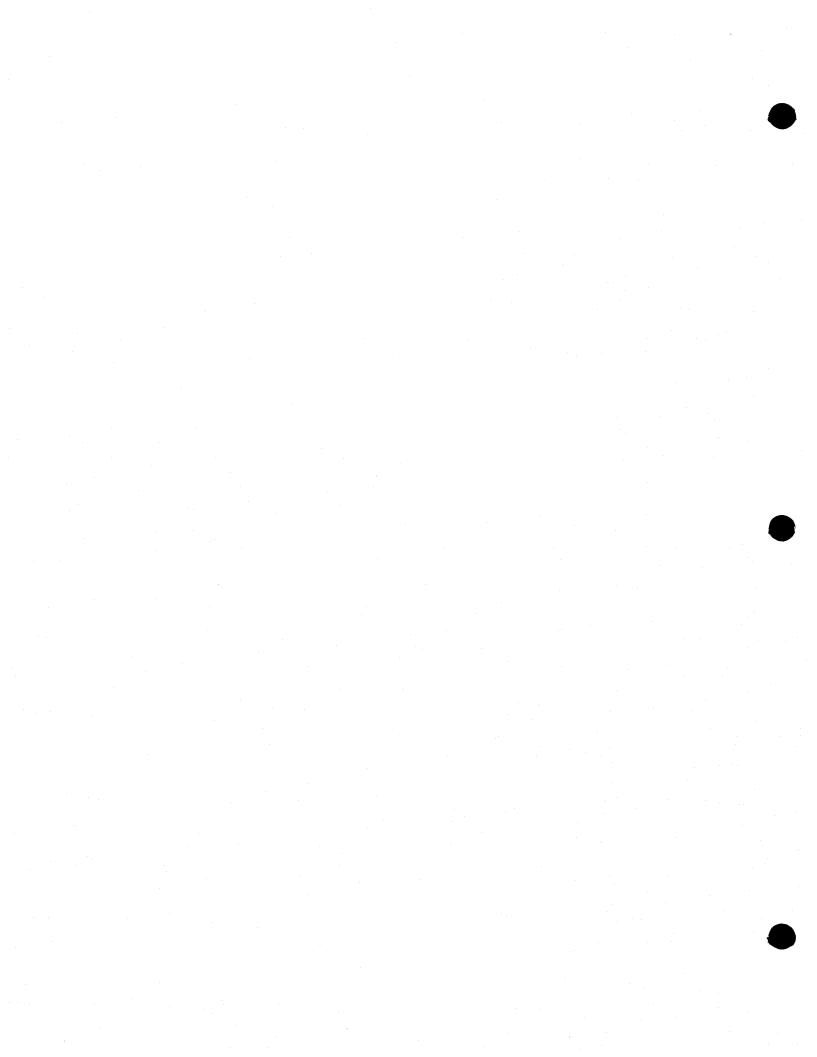
REPORTER: TIMOTHY SCOTT

CSR NO. 8517

## GERTIFIED GOPY

# SCOTT COURT REPORTING

Depositions - Arbitrations - Hearings (805) 871-3156 - Fax (805) 871-2472 2717 Occidental Street Bakersfield, California 93305



REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT of the PROCEEDINGS,
taken in re the above matter, on Tuesday, June 24,
1997, commencing at 7:00 p.m., at Rosamond Elementary
School, 1981 Rosamond Boulevard, Rosamond,
California, before Timothy Scott, a Certified
Shorthand Reporter, holding Certificate No. 8517.

### SPEAKERS FROM BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT:

MR. AHMED MOSHEN MR. GEORGE DEVERSE

#### SPEAKERS FROM AUDIENCE:

MONNA WAGNER JOHN ROMBOUT PATRICK CHIODO KAREN BENSON JAMES HOOPER BARBARA RIGG PAT BOETSCH MANUEL ZAMORA TERRY MURRAY CURT SKELTON SUE MATHIS JERRY BOETSCH GLENN A. SETTLE JERRY BOETSCH, JR. DEAN WEBB OLAF LANDSGAARD KEITH GAINEY DAN SPOOR JEFF GUTIERREZ MARY SHINEFLEW JESS FARMER KEN DALE LEONARD GRIMES JEFF ALFONSO

1	TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 1997				
2	ROSAMOND, CALIFORNIA				
3	7:00 P.M.				
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5					
6	MR. MOHSEN: Okay. May I have your				
7	attention, please.				
8	We're going to probably begin right now.				
9	It seems like we have most of the public				
10	that has signed up front, and we're going to				
11	initiate.				
12	So at this stage, I'll direct my				
13	comments to the court reporter, and we'll initiate				
14	this public meeting.				
15	This is a Bureau of Land Management,				
16	Department of the Interior, public meeting regarding				
17	the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Impact				
18	Report for this Soledad Mountain gold project.				
19	We have a court reporter today recording				
20	. the proceedings of this meeting so we can make it				
21	part of the public record. That's why I'm going to				
22	be speaking a little slower. I'm sure that the				
23	children in the room will appreciate that.				
24	The reason is, you want to make sure all				
25	the comments and concerns are documented by the court				

reporter. And the purpose of that is to make sure that the issues that you have are part of the public record.

When I close the meeting, that will become the public record. Everything after the meeting, we can still discuss things, but it will not be part of the public record unless you resubmit it formally through writing.

I want to let you know the way we run the meeting today is we have opened it up for discussions and your concerns and comments, and when the meeting is closed, we'll still be available at your discretion to discuss any issues that you may have regarding the project.

First, I want to introduce the people involved in this meeting today. We have representatives from Bureau of Land Management from the Ridgecrest office, and we also have representatives from the proponent of the project, the gold mining company, and we also the have the environmental contractors who have assisted the Bureau and Kern County in preparing the document.

Kern County has a representative here today taking notes and making sure that any issues and concerns that you folks have are also part and

shared with Kern County records.

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The BLM is leading this meeting regarding the compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, which is known as the NEPA.

NEPA requires the government to make decisions in an open process, making sure we hear your concerns and making sure these concerns are addressed in the document we have prepared.

If you recall, back in April of 1996, we also came here to Rosamond and opened up our public scoping process, which is the first part of the beginning to prepare the necessary permits for this operation.

What we've done back in April of '96 is, before we began to do anything at all, we asked you what are some of the issues and concerns that you have regarding this proposed project, and we emphasized "proposed."

At the beginning of the process, it's important to make sure that all the issues and concerns that you folks have are addressed in our document within the constraints allowed by law, which is very important, also.

We are a country governed by laws, which means the existing laws that we have will pretty much

lay the sideboards for what we can and cannot do.

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So back in April of 1996, we asked you what are the issues and concerns. We documented many comments, and we have made sure that your comments and concerns are part of the record.

We have published this information on the worldwide web, and we made sure that access to the issues was available to everyone, either through libraries or through newspapers or through that computer worldwide web internet access.

that we let you know the progress of the project because the project is very dynamic. We wanted to make sure that any provisions of the project, you are well aware, and any mitigations or any conditions that we can attach to the permit will be well thought of and well prepared for by the process, so we become defendable and also become fair and equitable.

So as we promised, we're back again in Rosamond to open up the public meeting again to discuss the issues in the EIS, address the EIS/EIR we have prepared.

The document has been available since

June 2nd, and if you have been part of our mailing

list, you have either have received notification of

its availability, or you have gotten the document yourself.

We are going to hold two meetings, one tonight in Rosamond, tomorrow in Mojave, to make sure the local community has ample opportunity to participate in the process.

Let me explain a little bit about the project before we ask you for some of your comments.

The project is roughly 20 percent on public lands, 80 percent on private lands. So a fifth of the project is on public property managed by the BLM on your behalf. The other 80 percent of the project is on private land, managed by your county and your state.

We have worked very closely with the county and the state to make sure that the federal and the state and the county process goes hand-in-hand and does not reiterate and repeat itself.

We made sure that all of the parties
were involved that were going to issue a permit to
the operation, are involved up front, so there
wouldn't be any future permits required that were not
foreseen by the agencies up front.

So, Kern County and BLM are really the

lead agencies who are required to coordinate with all the other agencies that will issue permits for this project. This project will have multiple permits before it commences.

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BLM and Kern County issue certain sets of permits; other agencies do that also, but BLM and Kern County are the lead government agencies in making sure your concerns and comments are addressed in the document and are communicated to the other agencies in the state and local governments.

So what we have done in the last year or so, is prepared what we believe is a defendable document that addressed the needs of the public and agencies regarding this project. We have done environmental surveys on the grounds, have conducted inventories of sensitive resources, have identified these resources and have mitigated -- developed a mitigation plan for avoiding or minimizing the impacts to these resources.

We understand that there are concerns from the community. We believe these concerns have been addressed in this document. And we want you to make sure that you've let us know if your concerns are not addressed. If they are addressed, let us know; if they are not addressed, let us know, also.

We'll make sure that we point you in the right direction in the document where we believe the issues have been addressed. We have documented your concerns back in 1996 as far as the issues and concerns.

So, before I open it up to you, I also want to give you a little bit of ground rules about how we're going to conduct the comments tonight.

I'm going to be asking you to come up and state your name and speak slowly so the court reporter can document your thoughts. And spell your last name for him, and then I'll give you three minutes to say your thoughts to the record. And then I'll give you a minute warning after that, and I'll ask you to allow someone else to make a comment.

I will go through everyone, and there's still opportunity for more discussions. I'll be glad to have you guys come up again for a second round.

But I would like to hear from everyone first; so I would like you to keep it at three minutes. That's the first ground rule, three minutes, and then I'll give you an extra minute to wrap up.

The second ground rule is, I would like it to be a civil discussion. We're all a neighborhood, and we're all part of this great

country. And it's very important that we address each other with politeness and respect, no matter where our issues are or wherever you stand.

It makes for a great country that we have the diversity and we have the freedom of speech to discuss these issues. Let's not forget that we are neighbors and we have families and we do have lives, and we want to make sure that we go back to them the same way we came in.

The third ground rule is, I would like you to know that this is not a public-opinion polling process. There is not a meter-reading of how many people are for or how many people are against a specific project. That's not the way the BLM conducts its business.

We try as hard as possible to look at our existing laws and regulations and get your concerns and issues addressed in there. And we will forward your comments to our management and to the folks who will make the decision. But you have to be aware that this is part of a long-term land-use planning process, which started with the California Desert Conservation Area Plan, if you all recall that; if you haven't, I'll spend a few minutes on it. I think it's very important that you all be aware of

it.

You all have houses in the area and you all know zoning laws, what you can and cannot do on your property, whether you can animals or whether you can have a wind turbine or whether you can have a solar panel.

really, except on a larger scale. We can say this area is zoned for animals or it is zoned for plants, it is zoned for recreation or it is zoned for mining and development, or it is zoned for other uses. It's a process that we took twenty-five years to complete. We started in the early '60s and finished in 1979.

After extensive public comment, I think 40,000 comments were received by the BLM during that process, \$12 million was spent in 1979 completing this plan.

And what it basically does is, it zones the desert based on its uses. If I may, I will go up to this map and explain to you a little more what that means, because I want to make sure when you are providing us your comments, to keep that in mind.

The BLM basically zoned the desert into four major areas. And it's twenty-five million acres of public and private, but only twelve million acres

is public lands, which is really the color pattern you see here.

The zoning that we've basically done is, say, that some lands used should be zoned for no development, and then some other lands be zoned for extensive use, which is really the scale here. The green means no development, which is our wilderness areas, our areas that are off limits to road and vehicle access, the pristine things that we designated, and there are millions of acres of it all over the desert.

The yellow areas are what we refer to as Class L, which is a limited access, and there are some roads there, but we're not going to allow any new roads in the areas. It's a zoning concept, again, that says no new roads except the existing ones.

As you go down the list, obviously, it gets less and less restrictive and more and more permissive as far as access. So Class M means moderate use, means that we will allow some access, some roads and some development. And Class I is intensive use, by definition means we allow a lot of activities there, off-road racing, developments like wind turbines.

By definition, intensive use means the resource values are low; so we can allow a lot more things to happen.

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As we zone this area, the Soledad Mountain fell in an area that had low-resource values as far as habitat, and had existing mining operations; so the area that it was zoned for did not conform to the limited and the environmental conservation zones.

So the zone was unclassified, which, again, gives it the management restriction that we can allow activities to happen there. And it's very important because once we zoned it that way, we allowed mining claims, we allowed investment in the area, and now we are trying to make sure that the operation can -- that it's consistent with the way we zoned the land for years, can be permitted in a sound environmental manner.

So, with that, I want you to make sure your comments are focused on how can we make sure that we can mitigate the impacts. Because the area has been historically zoned for mining, and it's going to probably continue in the future as part of the land use, county zoning and federal zoning, to be zoned for development.

With that, I will close my spiel and try to now open it up for you folks.

As I said, I'll remind you again, please come in and stand here and give us your name.

If you don't want to have to stand here and give us your name, it's going to be hard for us to document your public comments on the record.

Because the court reporter, again, has to be a part of it.

Again, once the meeting is over, you can approach any one of us. We will be hanging out here for a few more minutes, if needed, and we'll be able to answer any questions you might have without having to state your name first, and go through all these formalities. Okay?

So are we ready to go?

I'll open it up, and anyone who's willing to come up, just raise your hand, and I'll pick you out from the crowd, and ask you to come up.

Ma'am, please state your name for the court reporter.

Thank you.

MS. WAGNER: My name is Monna Wagner. The spelling on my name is M-o-n-n-a, W-a-g-n-e-r.

I am here at the invitation of

Mr. Wyman to read into the record Senator William J.

Pete Knight's support of the Golden Queen Mining

Company, Soledad Mountain Mining Project.

The senator directed duplicative originals to Supervisor Steve Perez and the Kern County Planning Department, and that's what I will be reading into the record this evening with -- I have several copies also available for BLM and for anyone else who would be interested in a copy.

And it is directed to -- well, to Supervisor Perez and to Mr. Barnhill from the Planning Department.

"Please find this letter as an endorsement of the proposed Golden Queen Mining Company, Soledad Mountain Mining Project."

It's kind of a tongue twister.

"This project is vital to the economic future of Kern County. It's anticipated that this project will provide nearly 500 jobs over the duration of operation. Jobs will vary from labor and semi-skilled to clerical and supervisory. With the mine conservatively projected to produce twelve to sixteen years, Golden Queen Mining employees will contribute to the economic base of Kern County well into the next century.

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"The company has also taken many necessary steps to ensure they meet all the environmental standards mandated by the State of California and the Federal Government.

"Issues have not impacted any threatened or endangered species, and meeting strict water and air quality standards have been addressed.

"Considering the economic benefit and the minimal environmental impact Golden Queen Mining would bring to Kern County, I urge the Board of Supervisors to enthusiastically approve this project.

"Warmest regards, William J. Pete Knight, California State Senator, Seventeenth Senatorial District."

Thank you.

MR. MOHSEN: Anybody else who wants it make a comment?

sir.

MR. ROMBOUT: I would like to introduce myself. My name is John Rombout, I'm the mayor of the City of Tehachapi. We have a similar resolution that we passed at our city council meeting. bore you with what it says, the "whereases" and "therefores."

I would like to urge us to support this

project. East Kern County and East Kern Alliance, we're struggling in this area to provide jobs. We need the economic benefit that this kind of development can bring to our whole area.

As many of you know, we're sort of considered the poor stepsisters of West Kern County, and we sort of have to support ourselves out here.

And I think it's very important for us to think that -- you know, we know that Ridgecrest is having a hard time, the military bases are having a considerable downsizing. And I think it's important that we support projects which can make us economically viable. And I would like to encourage everybody to support the project.

We in Tehachapi, we feel that we will benefit from this from people that work there, can live in our community, shop in our community, and I think that it will help our area.

Thank you.

MR. MOHSEN: Sir.

MR CHIODO: People, my name is Patrick Chicdo, C-h-i-o-d-o, for the record. I'm a professional safety engineer. I've been conducting an investigation in the desert area over by the Cactus Queen.

For the record, I was the individual that set off of the first explosive charge at Cactus Queen. I pulled the first explosives permit. And I worked there for three months until I got tired of them throwing dust in the air and mercury in the air.

Now, my investigation has come up with a

Now, my investigation has come up with a lot of mercury contamination out there, and it's not mercury itself. All the government agencies go out there and test for mercury vapor.

I found that the ponds out there, the cyanide ponds, are out of balance. And I've been out there many times with the Cal-OSHA inspectors.

The fumes from the cyanide combine with the mercury vapors and make what they call mercury cyanide -- or mercury cyanate. It got in the air and blew all over the place.

I have samples of mercury and cyanide combination in water coolers, swamp coolers.

How many of you people out here have those little white crystals? Yeah? Those white crystals are alkali and mercury cyanide together. And it's from the emission of mercury and the emission of the cyanide.

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm a miner.

Before I even started doing any of this stuff, I was

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digging holes and blasting holes in the ground.

What you need to do is make sure that these people put some form of mitigation, some form of controls so that when they start blowing 100,000 pounds of dust in the air because some explosives guy decides he wants to blast a rock to smithereens so he won't have to crush it, and half of the ore goes in the air along with the mercury compounds and everything else.

Now, right here is the Environmental Impact Statement, right here. And it says they won't put in the air acetylide, arsenic, arsine, benzene, beryllium, tanium, copper, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide.

Now, hydrogen cyanide is not natural to earth, it's man-made. So that means they will be putting hydrogen cyanide out when their ponds get out of balance. And how they get cut of the balance is when mercury gets in there from the center bar, and throws the cyanide way out of whack. So they can't put the mercury compounds into the pile; they have to smelt them separately. And when they smelt them, they blow the mercury in the air.

Now, it is documented by MSHA, Mine Safety and Health Administration, and Cal-OSHA, that

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the Cactus Mine was cited several times for blowing mercury in the air weeks on end.

When the Cal-OSHA inspector Henry

McEntyre went out there, he found that the scrubber

was broke, and they were out there vacuuming mercury

off the ground. And people wonder why their teeth

are falling out.

Let me finish here.

MR. MOHSEN: One more minute.

MR. CHIODO: It also has lead, manganese, mercury, naphthalene, nickel, PAHS's, selenium and zinc.

Now, in the Environmental Impact it says "air quality" and it also says "health hazards to public safety."

Now, I do mean to chastise the Bureau of Land Management. I have dealt with them for many, many years. I have been mining for thirty-five years. Some of you out here have mined for longer than that.

They should have supplied these prior to this meeting so that you individuals who were intelligent enough to read this could have read it and see what you're going to be breathing and see what's going to happen and why your kids get the

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shakes or why your kid can't think right.

I'm going to sit down and let you guys talk, but you think about what I'm saying. Because I am an investigator for a large attorney firm, and we're bothering to drop the bomb on these people.

MR. MOHSEN: We have to try and -- I'm going to put some of his thoughts down because I want to explain to you how we're going to responding to all the concerns you've had today.

One of the important documents we produced is called a Final EIS/EIR, which this is the draft portion of it. The Final EIS/EIR really is taking every comment, just like the one that was made, and responding to it item by item.

We're not going to go around it. not going to dismiss it. We are not going to disregard it. We are going to address it with a response.

It will be very hard for me to articulate that response today because it takes more than just me to do it. The State of California has one of the toughest environmental laws in the country.

So we have to consult with the other agencies and make sure that the response to the

comments that were made are by the appropriate agency, whether it's for toxics or air quality or for water quality, it will be done and documented in the final EIS/EIR sent to you again for review, holding a public meeting, if necessary, again, to hear your concerns again. We're not going to exhaust this process

by one meeting. But comments such as the gentleman just made need to be addressed, and it will be in due time when we're ready to publish the document.

I will put some of his thoughts down just to make sure if someone has additional ones, that they can go ahead and state them, but if they are repeating what this gentleman said, then, basically it's already been documented and it's going to be addressed in the final document.

The lady raised her arm earlier. Yes. And then, sir you're right after her.

MS. BENSON: I'm Karen Benson, Vice Mayor of California City and I have a Mayor's proclamation from California City.

"Whereas, the combined Draft EIR/EIS has been prepared by Kern County and the BLM for the Soledad Mountain Mining Project and Golden Queen Mining Company;

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"And whereas, Soledad Mountain has a land use designation for mining the riches for such land use and purpose. The Golden Queen Mining Soledad Mountain Project will appropriately continue such land use;

"And whereas, the Soledad Mountain

Project will require the investment by Golden Queen

Mining of over \$40 million in construction costs,

will use Kern County suppliers for building and

construction materials and will employ over 250

initial employees for eight months;

"And whereas, the project will provide permanent jobs for a projected 230 employees over a lifetime of the project, estimating between twelve and sixteen years. And Golden Queen Mining is committed to hiring East Kern residents in supporting Kern County's businesses;

"And whereas, the Golden Queen Mining Company will be constructing and operating a state-of-the-art mine and reclaiming operations while being simultaneously committed to the preservation of historical mining works and structures in the area covered by the project;

And whereas, the Soledad Mining Project will provide an important addition to the Kern County

tax base, and help meet infrastructure needs of Southeast Kern County;

"Therefore, I Mayor Mary Adams by virtue of the authority vested in me as mayor, do hereby support the Golden Queen Mining Company in their endeavors in East Kern, and recommend that approvals required by local agencies be granted to allow this project to go forth.

"In witness whereof, I hereunto set my hand and cause the great seal of California City to be affixed this 6th day of June, 1997."

The whole City Council of California
City supports this project. East Kern is considered
a depressed area. The benefit of jobs and the fact
that they will spend their money in the East Kern
region is enough to support this project.

Thank you.

MR. HOOPER: Hello everyone. Last time I was in this building was forty-years years ago. I went to elementary school here.

I have a long-term interest and I cherish the desert, and I would like to see it remain livable.

My name is James Hooper. I live at 3966 Backus Road. I have a home there and one in

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California City.

I agree that California has a lot of environmental protection laws, but the problem is enforcement.

I have a couple of articles here, one involving -- perhaps you saw them -- the burning of tires -- the Kern County Air Pollution Control

District permitted the burning of tires, and then got their hand caught in the cookie jar about the environment and said basically, "Oops."

Therein lies a big part of the problem is, who can we trust to tend the chicken coop, and many times within the Environmental Impact Report it's the mining company that turns in the information. And that's a hard situation to trust, folks.

This is another article regarding the Lahonton Water District, which permitted sewage dumping against -- well, in contrast to many of their own rules about covering it, plowing it in and so on. And they did not begin to comply until they were pressured to by environmentally-conscientious people.

I also would like to say, I think this is a great project. It's in the wrong place.

I live on Backus Road area. I belong to